

A Look at Jihadists Suicide Fatwas: the Case of Algeria

Prucha, Nico

Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version
Arbeitspapier / working paper

Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Prucha, N. (2010). *A Look at Jihadists Suicide Fatwas: the Case of Algeria*. (Working Paper / Österreichisches Institut für Internationale Politik). Wien: Österreichisches Institut für Internationale Politik (öiip). <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-57613-2>

Nutzungsbedingungen:

Dieser Text wird unter einer Deposit-Lizenz (Keine Weiterverbreitung - keine Bearbeitung) zur Verfügung gestellt. Gewährt wird ein nicht exklusives, nicht übertragbares, persönliches und beschränktes Recht auf Nutzung dieses Dokuments. Dieses Dokument ist ausschließlich für den persönlichen, nicht-kommerziellen Gebrauch bestimmt. Auf sämtlichen Kopien dieses Dokuments müssen alle Urheberrechtshinweise und sonstigen Hinweise auf gesetzlichen Schutz beibehalten werden. Sie dürfen dieses Dokument nicht in irgendeiner Weise abändern, noch dürfen Sie dieses Dokument für öffentliche oder kommerzielle Zwecke vervielfältigen, öffentlich ausstellen, aufführen, vertreiben oder anderweitig nutzen.

Mit der Verwendung dieses Dokuments erkennen Sie die Nutzungsbedingungen an.

Terms of use:

This document is made available under Deposit Licence (No Redistribution - no modifications). We grant a non-exclusive, non-transferable, individual and limited right to using this document. This document is solely intended for your personal, non-commercial use. All of the copies of this documents must retain all copyright information and other information regarding legal protection. You are not allowed to alter this document in any way, to copy it for public or commercial purposes, to exhibit the document in public, to perform, distribute or otherwise use the document in public.

By using this particular document, you accept the above-stated conditions of use.

A LOOK AT JIHADISTS SUICIDE FATWAS: THE CASE OF ALGERIA

Nico Prucha

(Affiliated Researcher at the Austrian Institute for International Affairs (OIIP),

Ph.D. Candidate University of Vienna)

Copyright: www.rieas.gr

Abstract

Responding to critical questions on the al-Hebah Forum in 2007, the leading chief ideologue of AQIM, Abu 'I-Hassan Rashid, provides a chilly look on the jihadists practical understanding and definition of deploying suicide-bombers and the potential of killing innocent Muslim bystanders during such operations. The 2007 document is based on comprising Arabic sources that have been over the years disseminated and amended by the means of the internet. The article intends to provide an assessment of alleged Islamic principles used for such attacks and draws on a comprising database of jihadist writings and videos. Rashid cites and builds his arguments on writings that can be in the meantime termed as common understanding and knowledge by most sympathizers on- and offline. By including AQIM videos the article intends to further analyze the practical incorporation of the language and notion of the jihadists as portrayed and disseminated by AQ's video outlets.

Key Words: *Jihad, Global Terrorism, Algeria, Fatwa, AQIM, Suicide-, Martyrdom-Operations*

“So where is he who truthfully says of his brothers, the Mujahideen, “I extend my greetings to you”, then drives his car bomb or wears his explosives-belt to go into the enemies of God, the blessed and sublime, encounters them and thus gives them to God. And what a difference between those among the killed! Slain on the path of God, mighty and sublime is He – or slain on the path of the devil!”¹

¹ Speech by “one of the brothers” in the AQIM video “kutiba ‘alaykum al-qital” published by its media outlet al-Andalus in mid-August 2010. Shortly after the publication of this video, two Spanish hostages had been

“That youth, who puts upon him what kills him, first of all to kill himself, is without doubt someone who wants to kill himself and something like this is not permissible except if it is for the greater common good for Islam. Thus, if there is the greater good involved and a higher avail for Islam, then this is permissible.”

Saudi scholar al-Uthaymeen, cited by AQIM ideologue Abu 'l-Hasan Rashid

Frequently statements and videos are published online by al-Qaeda and affiliated groups, prominently by the Taliban in Afghanistan / Pakistan or the Shabab movement in Somalia, claiming successful attacks of Mujahidin against their enemies by the means of what has become widely known in western media as ‘suicide’ or ‘martyrdom operations’. These operations, coined in Arabic as *al-'amaliyat al-istishhadiya*, are to be understood as operations, with the alleged claim, that the Mujahid, or the attackers who are undertaking such operations, are to attain the “*shahada* on the path of God.” The *shahada*, the Islamic creed to confess that “there is no God but God and Muhammad is His messenger” has been utilized and hijacked by the jihadists propaganda to define anyone killed by a chosen ‘martyrdom operation’ or who has been killed in a ‘regular’ battle as a *shahid*, a “martyr”. In the jihadists notion the *shahid* and hence the *al-'amaliyat al-istishhadiya* operations-type enable the individual *Mujahid* to attain a status by their worldly deed to enter Paradise, “thus to attain the *shahada* in jihadist speak has a greater meaning of one’s readiness to sacrifice all possible worldly goods for God – including one’s own life and to pass on to the Afterlife² (the *shahid* is not dead, only in this world).”³

The comprising concepts to issue, justify and defend such operations has led to the dissemination of a wide range of writings over the past years. Generally, each *Mujahid* or high-ranking-member of a group as well as in some cases innocent Muslim bystanders or Islamic victims of air raids by outside/occupying/vassal forces attain the status of elements killed in a universal battle between “the program of truth versus the program of falsehood.” Subsequently, the killed attain the status of a *shahid* or are termed *istishhadiyin*, referring to those passively killed in a battle or actively as ‘suicide-bombers’. The individual sentiment deeply rooted within the globalized AQ and vividly expressed online and the jihad-videos, is the claim that the *Mujahid* who undertakes so-called suicide-bombing operations is waging a proper jihad for the

released and a day later AQIM undertook the first suicide-car-bomb attack in the history of Mauritania. For details: <http://themoornextdoor.wordpress.com/2010/08/24/mauritania-car-bombing-at-nema/>

² Examples are plentiful on how the firm belief of attaining the ‘Afterlife’ is propagated by (mostly) Arabic primary sources. An ideological writing published by al-Fajr in 2009 sums, however, quite practically the most basic notions up in one document: Al-Husaynayn, Khalid: *Kayfa tukhattat li-akhiratak?*, *Markaz al-fajr li-l-'ilam*, 2009.

³ Prucha, N. (2010) Notes on the Jihadists’ Motivation for Suicide-Operations, *Journal for Intelligence, Propaganda and Security Studies*, 4 (1), pp. 59.

'greater good' of Islam and ultimately archives a divine reward for his "testimony" (*wasiya*), for sacrificing his own life for God, for His religion and for the Islamic *umma*. The *Mujahid* thus dies for the sake of Islam and can be accredited for his deeds with paradise and ideally with the famous women of paradise (*al-hur al-'ayn*), as the filmed testimonies, videos in general and documents often clearly state.⁴ With 'suicide' (*al-intihar*) being strictly forbidden in Islam – and also within the jihadist spectrum of writings – most alleged theological radical justifications for these operations have a strict definition of who is a *shahid* or what these kind of operations are and why they are sought legitimate. All of these writings are freely available online with the internet once again being the preferred platform for al-Qaeda to make vast amounts of documents and videos by their ideologues accessible to a huge and growing crowd of sympathizers of different backgrounds on a global scale. One may be inclined to term this the jihadists' cloud on the internet with all access to all levels of the internet. Justifying acts of violence online in various statements against "the means of the puppet-regimes and the occupying crusaders", "tyrants" (*zalimin*), "apostates" (*murtadin*), *mushrikeen*⁵ or "idols" (*tawaghit*) while fighting for God and justice, are mostly underlined with pictures and high quality, professionally made videos and usually attract a lot of attention within the forums and partially on websites, blogs, facebook, MySpace, YouTube, to name a few. Members praise the killed *Mujahidin* as "true, steadfast and courageous heroes, on the path of God", giving them credit to attain the *shahada* – no matter how they have died. The online forums are not only the main platforms but also used to effectively disseminate written, filmed and audio propaganda by high ranking al-Qaeda ideologues, suicide-bombers, fighters of all file and rank and affiliated media groups. Furthermore, the forum members – on the other hand – are also able to openly post their questions and concerns publicly. By this *modus operandi*, the ideologues and generally the AQ leadership elements can respond to criticism and further cover niches by directing and

⁴ In the videos aspiring suicide-bombers speak out and deliver their "testimony" (*wasiya*) to the online spheres of al-Qaida or specific ideological writings reinforce and affirm the set of beliefs, that those who die in such an operation will be favored by God and bestowed by him, as stated in Quran 3:169. See also, for example: 'Abd al-'Aziz bin Muhammad (Abu Usama al-'Iraqi) *Mushawiq al-arwah ila l-nisa bilad al-afrah* (Global Islamic Media Front, 2007).

⁵ A short overview of such terming would be *mushrikeen* for those who are sought guilty of 'partnering' or associating God with idols, other Gods or material objects. The term *mushrikeen* is based on historical sources and the Quran, whereas the jihadist implements the historical meaning in modern times. Christians, Jews and *mushrikeen* are three named groups in the Quran who had been historic enemies. *Mushrikeen* is a term frequently used for non-Muslims (Christians, Jews, idolaters) but also for fellow Muslims (Shiites, Sufis). Another prominent term deployed within jihadist writings and the speeches of AQ figures is the specific definition of the 'apostates' (*murtadin*). The *murtadin* is a jihadist wording for primarily fellow Muslims (indifferent of their specific creed) who are working for any type of state. As 'statehood' in a modern sense is part of the violation of the *tawheed* principle, those Muslims are in the jihadist mindset not Muslims anymore and part of a greater hostile system incorporated in the understanding of the universal conflict of "truth" and "falsehood".

creating new ideology with the usual proper historic claim mixed with theological, social and politically sentiments and notions.⁶

This has led, for example and most prominently, to the “Open Meeting with *Shaykh* Ayman al-Zawahiri” in 2008, who encouraged forum members to post their questions and then responded by two lengthy documents. His answers include the justification of deploying ‘suicide bombers’ or the ruling of Muslims being used as “human shields by the infidel enemy” (*hukm al-tatarrus*) and thus declared Muslim civilians as legal to risk being killed as “collateral damage” during such types of attacks.⁷ In the meantime such “open interviews” have become quite common in the jihadist forums, with various “Answers to the Open Interview with *shura* Council Members of Qaedat al-Jihad in Khorasan”⁸ or as-Sahab published interviews⁹, that can include questions posted by forum members, such as “as-Sahab’s meeting with *ustadh* Ahmad Faruq”, subtitled “AQ Chief for *da’wa* and the Media Department for Pakistan”.¹⁰ Being asked by “a student of the Medical University of Algeria” on the legality and justification of the 11 December 2007 attacks in Algiers, where “al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) [undertook multiple suicide bombings] whether killing of children and women is part of your jihad? I want from al-Zawahiri to answer me regarding those who kill the peoples in Algeria; what is the sharia-law proof of killing innocents. The blood of sixty Muslims was spilled on the eleventh of December in Algiers and AQ claimed the attacks in which Muslims, who profess the unity of God (*tawheed*), died. Therefore, congratulations to the heroes al-Zawahiri and Droukal for killing innocent students, children and women on this feast. What are the sins of the innocent?”

Following the perverse and simple reasoning of AQIM after the 11 April suicide attacks in Algiers, al-Zawahiri repeats his claim, “that those killed on 11 December 2007 in Algiers had not been of the innocent. Thus, according to the statement by our AQIM brothers, they had been of

⁶ One example is the rapid reaction by Abu Yahya al-Libi to justify and defend the Taliban who released 19 South Korean hostages when their demands had been met and South Korea withdrew its troops from Afghanistan. Al-Libi, A.Y. (2007) *Daf’ ar-rayn ‘an asiri ‘asabat al-Kureen: Mabhath mukhtasar hawl al-Kureen al-ladhina ukhtadifuhum al-mujahidun fi Afghanistan*.

⁷ Al-liqa al-maftuh ma’ al-shaykh Ayman al-Zawahiri, first part, *As-Sahab Media*, 1429 a.H., p.6, and – specifically – p.3 and p.25 for al-Zawahiri’s response and referencing to the question of “the ruling of human shields.” On the issue of *hukm al-tatarrus*: Brachman, J. and Warius, A. (2008) Abu Yahya al-Libi’s “Human Shields in Modern Jihad”, CTC Sentinel, May 2008, Vol. 1, Issue 6, p. 1-4.

⁸ As the case with *Shaykh* ‘Abd al-Majeed ‘Abd al-Maajed, *Markaz al-Balagh li-l-‘ilam*, 2010.

⁹ It is important to note, that interviews are a highly effective propaganda and indoctrination tool deployed by the global jihadist media departments. Critical questions are being answered and ‘defused’ even by sometimes dissatisfying replies or by referencing other parts of the online corpus of jihadist texts.

¹⁰ Published in mid 2010 as a filmed interview, that was later transcribed and published within the forums. *Ustadh* (professor) Ahmad Faruq can be considered a hero for the jihadist movements in Afghanistan and Pakistan, a scholar who remained steadfast despite imprisonment and who didn’t recant any of his writings.

the infidel crusaders and soldiers of the government, who are defending them. And our AQIM brothers are more sincere, truthful and just than the sons of France, the liars, who regard Algeria being theirs and for America; those, who preach for the love of Israel until their leader of the Crusade, America, is satisfied. Those who commit crimes against the *sharia* and violate it and remove its jurisdiction by force and by manipulation; those who murder hundreds and thousands of innocent Muslims; those who help the Americans and their Crusader allies to kill millions of Muslims, can neither be – by any chance – sincere nor fair.

For the 11 December operation was directed against the headquarters of the United Nations, the Constitutional Assembly and the Police Academy. There had been no school children and no women's hospitals. The U.N. is an enemy for Islam and for Muslims. For it is the [institution] that codified and sanctioned the establishing of the State of Israel and its conquest over Muslim territories; for the U.N. views Chechnya as a part inseparably from Crusader Russia; that considers Ceuta and Melilla as inseparable parts of Crusader Spain; it is the one codifying the presence of Crusader soldiers in Afghanistan as based on the Bonn Conference; the U.N. is approving the presence of Crusader soldiers in Iraq by its various resolutions; it decreed the separation of East Timor from Indonesia, while it doesn't approve this for Chechnya, the whole Muslim Caucasus region, for Kashmir, for Ceuta and Melilla or for Bosnia.

God granted the heroic *amir*, the *shahid* – as we deem him – Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi, success – may God grant him mercy. So he blew up the headquarters of the U.N. in Baghdad at the beginning of the Crusader raids on Iraq. Subsequently, its remnants turned back and fled. Consequently, he ruined the Crusaders plan, to undertake their Crusader raid by an international force, without provoking Arab and Islamic sentiments. This is the same ruse, which the Crusaders used in Lebanon, hence the forces of Hizbullah withdrew 30 km to its rear and approved an international Crusader presence occupying Muslim territories on Lebanese soil. Furthermore, the leadership of Hizbullah even promised the perseverance of safety of these occupying Crusader forces on Muslim territories.”¹¹

Mostly, al-Zawahiri references his book “The Exoneration” (*al-tabri'a*) and his earlier (1996) writing “The Healing of the Chests of the Believers” (*Shifa' sudur al-mu'minin*) to claim the legality of undertaking the propagated *al-'amaliyat al-istishhadiya* and simply, practical and as convenient as it is, defines any Muslim civilian or bystander killed in such an operation either as an apostate working for the Crusaders as an agent or henchman. The interaction of the content of jihadist materials online seemed to have been taken up and extended by the GSPC, who

¹¹ Al-liqa al-maftuh ma' al-shaykh Ayman al-Zawahiri, first part, *As-Sahab Media*, 1429 a.H., p. 4-6.

turned into AQIM and thus lets its ideologues and rhetoric appear as part of AQ global – with proper citation of both al-Zawahiri and bin Laden next to other AQ figures.

The Case of Algeria – Abu al-Hasan Rashid and the response to questions regarding the 11 April suicide attacks in Algiers

Prior to the interaction of “open interviews” that is in the meantime somewhat jihadist media mainstream,¹² AQ sympathizers used the online-forums to question the devastating suicide-bombing operations with massive civilian, Muslim, casualties in Algeria, forcing a response by AQIM. Members of the *al-Hesbah* Forum, one of the pioneers and a major mother-ship of jihadist forums that has been taken off the web for good in 2008,¹³ doubted the ‘lesser evil, greater good’ principle and questioned the deaths of Muslim civilians and the *modus operandi* of the operation. These attacks, a pretext to the more severe 11 December 2007 attacks, had been criticized and thus AQIM was forced to respond. This open criticism led to a comprising response by the “Member of the *Sharia* Committee / Chief of the Judicial Committee” of AQIM, Abu ‘I-Hasan Rashid al-Bulaydi, who published the answers on 29 May 2007 in a 30-page long document entitled “Answers by Abu ‘I-Hasan Rashid to the Questions of al-Hesbah”.¹⁴



In this April attack, the first of a wave of *al-'amaliyat al-istishhadiya* strikes that hit the Algerian capital, 33 people were killed and over 220 injured.¹⁵ According to the AQIM statement, issued

¹² Including “open messages” by AQ ideologues such as “the Open Message to the People of the Border and their Supporters” by AQIM ideologue Abu Hiyan ‘Asim.

¹³ On 11 September 2008 several pioneer jihad forums had been shut down after the detention of several alleged administrators in Saudi Arabia, <http://www.alriyadh.com/2008/09/11/article373597.html> (12.09.2008). The ‘surviving’ members simply switched to other, still active forums, and thus simply changed the importance of the URL with the same content and the majority of the jihadist online flock.

¹⁴ As usual, this document is ready to print and was published in both WORD and PDF formats. It can be downloaded (Arabic / WORD format) at <http://tawhed.ws/a?a=xc6pd27i> (18.09.2010).

¹⁵ A good overview, incorporating local media and a subsequent analysis of the statements issued by AQIM can be found here:

on the day of the attack, entitled *Badr al-Maghrib al-Islami*, the “full moon over the western Maghreb”, a great number of enemies had been killed in the first two assaults. “The first target: Headquarters of the government in Algiers, when the *shahid* Mu’adh bin Jabal drove a truck rigged with 700 kg of explosives bursting into the *murtadin* injuring according to our special sources close to 45 and killing an unknown number of the wounded, destroying part of the building. The second target: Headquarters of the international Police Interpol (...) where the *shahid* al-Zubayr Abu Sajida maneuvered a truck load of about 700 kg of explosives into the den of tyranny, disbelief and combat against jihad. (...) No less than 8 *murtadin* had been killed and an unknown number wounded. The third target: Headquarters of the Special Police (...). The *shahid* Abu Dujana directed his truck load of approximately 500 kg into the fortress (*husn*)¹⁶ of the *murtadin*, thus being able – by the grace of God – to destroy parts of it.”¹⁷



Screenshot from the AQIM video “Badr Maghreb al-Islami” showing how the targets had been staked out, including Google Earth.

Abu ‘I-Hasan Rashid issued a lengthy proclaimed *sharia* law assessment of using such operations against the enemy – and the acceptance of death and mayhem of fellow Muslims. Perhaps, the open questions and Rashid’s responses have simply reaffirmed the plan to hit the Algerian with the same *modus operandi* again on 11 December? Furthermore, al-Zawahiri’s

<http://www.pytr.org/pdf/GlobalAnalysis/Analysis%20of%20Suicide%20Car%20Attacks%20in%20Algeria.pdf> (18.09.2010).

¹⁶ This term is used as a direct analogy to the historical writings whereas scholars justified the attacks on fortresses, military encampments, strongholds, bases etc of enemies. *Husn* appears as a term to define a non-Islamic enemy who has set-up strongholds on Islamic territory and occupies Muslim territories. Muslims held as prisoners in such fortresses can be killed during assaults and attacks by Islamic forces, as the conquest of enemy strongholds is of higher avail to Islam. Rashid cites Ibn Taymiyya or Ibn Quddama for his purposes (p. 14). In a modern sense AQ applies *husn* for embassies and other more secure buildings.

¹⁷ Ghazwa Badr al-Maghreb al-Islami, p.2 – 3.

positive response and claim that most Muslim civilian casualties had “not been of the innocent”¹⁸ may have increased AQIM's favored weapon in their propagated jihad while comprising videos document both the *istishhadi*, including the testimony, as well as the depicted operation.

In the aftermath of the attacks, AQIM published comprising videos, including the professional combination of the propagated divine command to prepare for jihad (combat and weapons training, bomb-making, vehicle preparation, physical fitness) alongside the practical military output and thus the fulfillment of the “military readiness”: the filmed explosions after the read-out testimonies of the “three *istishhadiyin* of the lions of Islam to realize the raid (*ghazwa*) which is the first of its kind [in Algeria].”¹⁹



In his indoctrinating – but not original – answers, Rashid attempts to provide a thorough and detailed explanation based on verses of the Quran, quotes *hadith* from the *Sunna* collections, various *fatwas* by other radical scholars and also cites various historical figures for his purpose such as Ibn al-Quddama, Ibn Taymiyya or Ahmad bin Hanbal. Conspicuously, most of Rashid's references are found as quotations taken from radical writings of other jihadists scholars, including the lengthy fatwa by “the Mufti of the Mujahidin in Chechnya, Muhammad ‘Abdallah al-Sayf,”²⁰ who in great parts simply copy-and-pasted from Saudi AQAP leader and ideologue Yusuf al-‘Uyairi. Also sources found in the GIMF publication entitled “The Ruling on [Suicide]

¹⁸ It must be noted, that AQIM repeated their claim of not killing innocents in another recorded audio speech entitled “Who is Slaying the Innocent?!", released in early September 2008 by Salah ad-Din, “the head of the media [department] of the organization.” AQIM claims to be fighting for the defense of Muslims, thus protecting them from the alleged slaughtering of governmental and foreign forces who depict the casualties as victims of AQIM's operations. On 20 September 2010 in another AQIM statement entitled “Service for the their French masters: The Army of Mauretania Shells Defenseless Innocents”, AQIM claims that as a reaction to their successful operations the army retaliated by “targeting defenseless innocents of the Muslims that led to the death of a Muslim women, her name had been “Najeha”, and a small child whose name had been “al-Sakela”. (...) This is the work of the coward criminals of the puppet army.”

¹⁹ Ghazwa Badr al-Magrebi al-Islami, p. 2.

²⁰ A recently (re-) published bio can be found here (Arabic): <http://as-ansar.com/vb/showthread.php?t=16366&highlight=%C7%D3%C8%C7%E4%ED%C9> (18.09.2010)

Commando Attacks and Human Shields”²¹ are found next to comprising religious/historical concepts such as the “Companions of the Ditch” (*ashab al-ukhdud*), the finding of *inghimas*, i.e. the plunging into the rows of the enemy, expecting a certain death²² coincide with Rashid’s reasoning alongside a list of recent and contemporary Islamic scholars, who have issued and legitimized the use of *al-‘amaliyat al-istishhadiya* accordingly to jihadist understandings and reasoning. All of these writings can be retrieved online. The questions published in the document consisted of various concerns, such as the following examples:

1. “Preferences that the attacks targeted civilians. Thus we ask of you to comment to deny these [allegations].
2. Why hadn’t American interests been targeted with the observation that you had targeted Haliburton²³ [workers prior] and that you had undertaken [a necessary] preparedness (...) according to the methodology (*manhaj*) of Usama bin Laden regarding the targeting of American economical interests;
3. Aren’t these assaults going to [negatively] effect the fundament concerning the mass of people for you of the sons of the peoples of Algeria, who are in favor and sympathetic with you?
4. Can you provide us with books in regard of *sharia-law* proof, based on *sharia* sources for these attacks;
5. Why did you undertake *istishhadiya* operations;
6. Isn’t the media war waged by the idol-regimes going to unify the good people against you as a powerful result of the idols from the media, the army and the police? Isn’t this going to influence the people, as it happened in the Egyptian and Saudi experiment, when the people had been subjected by these regimes [forced to publicly recant] and there had not been any support by the Muslim public present.”

Before providing – the more or the less – answers to the above stated questions, Rashid addresses that the “noble reader must know that AQIM is not the pioneer to have opened the door of the *al-‘amaliyat al-istishhadiya*, deploying it as a means of combat while there is need for

²¹ ‘Abd al-Majeed ‘Abd al-Maajed (2009) *Ahkam al-gharat al-fida’iyat wa-l tatarrus, silsilat al-bina’ al-shakhsiyat al-Muslima*, 3 (Global Islamic Media Front).

²² Prucha, N. (2010) Notes on the Jihadists’ Motivation for Suicide-Operations, *Journal for Intelligence, Propaganda and Security Studies*, 4 (1).

²³ On 11 December 2006 AQIM planted two improvised explosive devices (IED’s) in Bouzareh (close to Algiers) at the highway exit. A video, introduced by sequences depicting Bin Laden and al-Zawahiri, with images from Google Earth used to plan the operations as well as the making of the IED’s was subsequently disseminated (“Ghazwa Bushawi”). The video was published by “the Media Council of the Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat” prior to the official merging into AQ and thus turning into AQIM in 2007.

its foundation. But there are precedents of those, prior to the [contemporary] jihadist groups. Their foundations are published, all praise be God, on the Islamic websites. Rather, I want to expound the permissibility of this kind of combat operations regarding those, who are outside of the jihadist circles.”²⁴ By this Rashid aims at preparing the reader with the globalized AQ notion regarding not only suicide-bomber operations but also the acceptance of potential ‘collateral damage’, namely Muslim civilians killed due to the fact of their physical proximity of targeted governmental and international installations. “My Muslim brothers [killed] in the explosions of Algiers had not been the target, they are civilians, just as the apostates (*al-murtadin*) claimed. However, the targets had been those, who are affiliated (*al-muntasibun*) with the government as well as the Interpol force, the police of the apostates and those who wage war against the religion of God. There has too been great and costly sacrifice among those war-farers, that has not been reported by the treacherous media outlets.”²⁵



“Interpol, the headquarters of global disbelief and a centre for countering jihad.”

Moving on to a detailed basis concerning “the proof for the permissibility of a human to kill himself based on the highest word of God”, Rashid aims at further proving a waterproof answer. His findings are simply touching and incorporating historical and religious sources, (more and less) contemporary scholars and derives the “People of the Ditch” argument to our contemporary times. The “People of the Ditch” is a vital part of jihadists’ reasoning and justification, as much as the *inghimas* principle, on which radical ideologues have extensively published on incorporating writing by Ibn Taymiyya or Ibn al-Nahhas²⁶. Basically, the primary motive of the “People of the Ditch” argumentation is based on a tale taken from the *hadith* collections whereas a boy

²⁴ Rashid, p.2.

²⁵ Ebd. Other jihadist online publications, particularly “The Voice of Jihad” had deployed a similar language and claims that the Saudi media as well as the international agencies would not report the “truth” and hence the contrary jihadists “counter-propaganda” is a fundamental backbone of the alleged claim to conduct “missionary work” and further the cause of “Islam”.

²⁶ Ibn Taymiyya: *Qa’oda fi l-inghimas fi l-’adu wa-hal yubah?* (Riyadh: Usul al-salaf).

(*ghulam*) and a king (*malik*) struggle in a similar fashion with each other as Moses and the Pharaoh (as stated in the Quran 85:4):²⁷ “Cursed were the people of the ditch (the story of the boy and the king)”²⁸. The worldly king claims divine powers as the nature of his entitlement, which is being rejected by the boy as a false belief and a violation of the monotheistic principle. The boy, however, is thus “sentencing himself to death in order to purify the religion; therefore, the four law schools of Islam decree it permissible for the Muslim to plunge (*inghimas*) into the rows of the disbelievers [expecting certain death].”²⁹ With the boy preferring death instead of acknowledging the king, he is termed a *shahid* after the king finally succeeds in killing him. The boy had not been killed, despite several attempts, only when the boy told the king how he can be killed, by the boy's own arrow taken from his quiver, while he said “in the name of the Lord of the boy”, did the king succeed, but he had lost the people present, as they now did not approve of the king anymore and sought the “Lord of the boy”.³⁰ They became the “people of the ditch” as the king punished them by threatening them to throw them into a ditch of fire, which had been preferred in “the name of the Lord of the boy”.³¹

Highly detailed and comprising notions based on historical and religious sources on specific key ideological understandings are derived to contemporary times and incorporated and subsequently covered by the global online jihad, filling more and more niches. “The permission to destruct oneself for the sake the [greater] common interest of religion”³² is a further line of demarcation according to jihadist propaganda defining the “real”, “true” Muslim. Bound to cherry-picked and context deprived parts of the Quran, the ideological writings and videos attempt to make their cases solid. With religious and historical sources, the jihadists’ writings and videos are sought being bound naturally to the historical times of Muhammad and early Muslims with the appeal – for contemporary times according to AQ’s reasoning – to gain entry to paradise and to justify AQ’s religious-political definitions. Ibn al-Hajjar is cited to reinforce the “permissibility of one’s self-destruction in jihad”³³ next to another statement that collateral damage is not forbidden, rather killed Muslims are most likely to enter paradise just as much as the suicide-bomber. Rashid cites the famous collector of 40 *hadith*, by Muhiyayaddin Abu Zakarayia al-Nawawi: “And what had been among the companions [of Muhammad] – may God be pleased

²⁷ And as Sulayman al-‘Alwan stresses in his fatwa issued in October 2000 “Ruling of *al-‘amaliyat al-istishhadiya* 1”, <http://tawhed.ws/r?i=58geq47a>

²⁸ Translation by Taqiud ad-Din and M. Khan.

²⁹ Rashid, p.4.

³⁰ See for example Rashid, p.4. Also (English): Surur, R.: *Ashab al-ukhdud – The People of the Ditch* (At-Tibyan Publications).

³¹ This sentiment appears in almost every *fatwa* and writing on *al-‘amaliyat al-istishhadiya*.

³² Rashid, p. 5.

³³ Rashid, p. 6.

with them – of love of the *shahada* and the desire for it. The people encountered fierce battles, being engulfed by combat and just agreed upon the permissibility to change oneself³⁴ in *jihad*, in combat and the like; among it; that he who dies in a war against the disbelievers due to combat will be a *shahid* no matter if he was killed by *their* weapons, by his horse, by his own weapon turned against him or by any other way.”³⁵ Followed by a similar approval of historical scholar Ibn al-Nahhas, Rashid simply then lists several Islamic scholars (*‘ulama*) who “have decreed *fatwas* by contemporary people of knowledge, declaring these operations (*istishhadiya* and *inghimas*) as permissible, most prominently are” among clearly pro-jihadist scholars also controversial and in the meantime rejected scholar Yusuf al-Qaradawi (in reference to his *fatwa* decreeing the use of female suicide-bombers by Hamas as permissible, 2006³⁶). Ranging from Sudan to Palestine, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia or Bosnia, Rashid implies the topic, the question and permissibility of such kinds of operations as clearly permissible and draws on a wide array of texts of the online jihadist corpus that indeed are clearly promoting the use of *istishhadiya* operations as a “legitimate means of *jihad* on the path of God”, decreed by a variety of scholars.³⁷

Responding to the question “why have the operations been realized by *istishhadiya* means”, Rashid reintroduces “the noble reader to those who have decreed *inghimas* as permissible whereas one plunges into a greater number of the *mushrikeen* with certain destruction” and names four conditions that must be met:

1. “Seeking the *shahada*;
2. existence of potential harm (*nakayia*);
3. danger for Muslims;
4. psychologically weakening the enemies, so that they may perceive this is the product of one among them, so what do you think of all of that?”³⁸

In Rashid’s reasoning, the suicide-bombings in Algiers are part of a tactic to undertake severe and effective attacks against enemies in order to widen the battlefields and in order to hit the metropolis³⁹ and urban centers, spreading fear and insecurity among the populace and showing

³⁴ The *Mujahid* enters a different state, as he serves God in the frontlines of *jihad*, participating in true worship, while combating non-Islamic enemies who threaten to conquer and violate Muslim populaces.

³⁵ Rashid, p. 8; Sharh Muslim, Kitab al-jihad wa-l sir (327/12).

³⁶ <http://www.palestine-info.info/arabic/feda/2004/isteshhadeat.htm>

³⁷ These scholars also reference sometimes their findings based on others, such as the case for the “opinion of Shaykh ‘Ali al-Khudayr” who cites Hamud bin ‘Uqla al-Shu’aybi, for example.

³⁸ Rashid, p. 11.

³⁹ For a discourse on attacking the metropolis and insurgency war: Fanon, F.: *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press).

the inability of the governmental-satanic forces to protect themselves. Furthermore and paradoxically, it's about "taking revenge for the innocent, the destroyed cities, annihilated villages or the dragging into the total war, that doesn't halt before the Muslims."⁴⁰

Throughout the document Rashid repeats the claim to defend and protect Muslims, even if Muslim civilians die in the course of AQIM's operations. The 'greater good' argument – besides the possibility to declare Muslim civilians as apostates (being secret governmental assets or questioning the physical proximity to the hit targets), 'martyrs' (innocents who had been used by the government as "human shields" to deter potential bombings) or to pay "blood money" (*diya*) – consists of a just war by AQIM against the regime of Algeria within a universal broadcast ideology of "truth" against "falsehood". "And we indeed declared that the ruling regime in Algeria is an apostate regime from the religion, loyal to the enemies of God, allowing the people the work with an authority not based on *sharia* law, enforcing it and killing for it. We have said this regime must be fought, it must not succeed."⁴¹



"Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi al-'Asimi a Mujahid, not even 15 years old, granted the success by God to destroy a barracks of the idol-army; perishing in this blessed operation which killed or wounded not less than 90 *murtads*." Screenshot taken from the AQIM video "Passionately Lovers of the *al-hur* [*al-'ayn*]."

The "answers" provided by Rashid had been sufficient enough to calm the most of the critical voices in the jihadist forums at the time (2007) – at least the ones that had been kept visible in hope of providing enough convincing arguments. Exactly seven months later another, similar, perhaps more devastating *al-'amaliyat al-istishhadiya* was carried out, with no need by Rashid to quiet any criticism. The 30-page long document is filled with a high mixture of pseudo-theological, historical and scholarly arguments that work on a sophisticated level for most consumers as most stated principles and justifications are bound to a rich corpus of Arabic

⁴⁰ Rashid, p. 12.

⁴¹ Rashid, p. 20.

writings. The achievement of AQ global is the creation of their own (online) school based on their chosen sources and documents that are re-published and distributed primarily via the internet by professional means – including videos that provide further appeal and logic to the stated political, religious and social goals of AQ on a global scale. Part of this reasoning is the belief of “re-enacting” a prophesy, struggling against “forces of disbelief” with an analogy to Moses and the Pharaoh or the “People of the Ditch” while young *Mujahidin* are praised and eulogized particularly after their *al-‘ amaliyat al-istishhadiya* and their testimonies are published online within the propagated ideological framework of the local AQ groups claiming being operational on a global scale fighting for universal goals.



Advertisement-banner for the video “ Ghazwat al-aseer 2” published by the media outlet “al-Furqan” of the “Islamic State of Iraq” (AQ in Iraq). Bound to the ideology are mostly young men who undertook suicide-operations, including Abu ‘Abdallah al-Ansari whose bomb-load damaged the Justice Ministry in Baghdad and who addresses the virtual *umma* in his AC Milan shirt.